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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

5 April 1962

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Comment on Tad Szulc's New York Times Article on
Castro's 26 March Speech

1. On 26 March Fidel Castro publicly denounced Anibal Escalante, the veteran Communist organizing secretary of the ORI, the prototype of the united Communist party being formed to rule Cuba. This speech was but the latest and most dramatic of a month-long series of indications of tension within the ruling group between "we" and "they" that is, between the new and the old Communists, the revolutionary fighters of the Sierra Maestra and the members of the prerevolutionary Communist party. Escalante was purged for working to establish old-line Communists in controlling positions in the party, the government, and the economy, to the exclusion of Castro's personal followers. What aroused Castro's ire was the partisan zealotry with which Escalante had been working to establish old-line Communists in controlling positions in the party, the government, and the economy, to the

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exclusion of Castro's personal following. Escalante was purged from the ORI and has since left the country.

2. This development was foreshadowed in our recent estimate on Cuba (NIE 85-62, "The Situation and Prospects in Cuba," dated 21 March 1962) in which we discussed at length the efforts of the old-line Communists to gain control of Cuba through control of the ORI and pointed to the potentialities for conflict between the old and new (Castro-Type) Communists on this account (paragraphs 2, 17-37, 133). We concluded that Fidel Castro would remain the titular leader, but that the real political power in Cuba would be vested in a collective leadership dominated by veteran Communists. We concluded also that, while some friction was probable in this relationship, an open conflict between Castro and the veteran Communists was highly unlikely.

3. In line with the foregoing, we agree with Szulc's basic contention that the Escalante affair is an important manifestation of the inherent conflict of interest between Castro, who hopes to achieve a genuinely collective leadership in which his own interests and adherents are fully represented, and the Cuban Communist Party, which intends ultimately to bring the entire apparatus of the Cuban Party and state under its own discipline and control. However, we

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think that Szulc goes too far in describing the situation as a "split between Premier Castro and the orthodox Communist leadership" and in suggesting that it will materially affect Cuban-Soviet relations.

4. There has been no split between Castro and such old-line Communist leaders as Blas Roca and Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. While Castro almost certainly intended his attack on Escalante as a warning to other old-line Communist leaders he followed it up by deploring distrust between the "old Communists" and the new ones and by pleading a condemnation of sectarianism plea for revolutionary unity in the new party organization. He is now fully committed to building his state along Communist lines and in cooperation with the professional Communists and, having made his point, cannot afford an open break either with the latter or with the USSR.

5. For their part, Blas Roca and Rodriguez have acquiesced in Escalante's downfall, making him the scapegoat for the group. The old-line Communist daily Hoy, which Escalante himself had founded, joined in condemning him, though in a way which shows that Castro's attack had come as a surprise. Soviet media have

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avoided comment on the subject, simply reporting the fact of Escalante's dismissal without Castro's explanation of it. The Communists have probably concluded that they will continue to depend for some time to come on staying in Fidel Castro's good graces and that they must be more subtle and circumspect in the future in building up their own network of controls around him. It is evident that neither the Cuban Communists nor the USSR is disposed to make an issue of the Escalante affair.

6. Our view is summed up in this week's Survey of Cold War Crisis Situations (No. 14-62, dated 4 April 1962). "In present circumstances, an open conflict for control of the ORI is highly unlikely. Castro has asserted his authority and the old-line Communists in the national directorate will take care to avoid provoking him further. However, their covert struggle for power within the regime will probably continue."

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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